

**ORDER OF THE COLLIN COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
COURT PARTICIPATING IN THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE
NORTH TEXAS REGIONAL VETERANS COURT PROGRAM**

WHEREAS, 2015 marks the fourteenth straight year of America at war and there are now more than 23 million U.S. veterans including 2 million veterans who have served in Iraq and Afghanistan; and

WHEREAS, the men and women of our military shoulder the burden of safeguarding our freedom; and

WHEREAS, the United States military instills a sense of honor, duty, leadership, commitment and respect, evident in the millions of veterans who have returned home to their communities as productive citizens, strengthened by their military experience; and

WHEREAS, one in five veterans has symptoms of a mental disorder or cognitive impairment, one in six veterans from Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom suffers from a substance abuse issue, and research continues to draw a link between substance abuse and combat-related mental illness; and

WHEREAS, unprecedented numbers of veterans nationwide are appearing in the courts to face charges stemming directly from these issues; and

WHEREAS, many jurisdictions do not currently track veterans in the criminal justice system; and

WHEREAS, Drug Courts evolved out of the necessity for a solution-based approach to an influx of drug abusing offenders before the courts; and the Drug Court model and the Mental Health Court Model as Specialty Courts are the nation's most successful, cost effective, and scientifically validated tool to deal with substance abuse and mental health issues in the criminal justice system; and

WHEREAS, Veterans Treatment Courts are hybrid Drug Courts and Mental Health Courts and have evolved out of the growing need for a Specialty treatment court model designed specifically for justice-involved veterans to maximize efficiency and economize resources while making use of the distinct military culture consistent among veterans; and

WHEREAS, many veterans have access to exclusive economic benefits and health services through the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, State Departments of Veterans Affairs, County Departments of Veterans Affairs, and a variety of additional programs for veterans operated through Veterans Service Organizations at federal, state and local levels; and

WHEREAS, grouping justice-involved veterans into a specific court docket significantly expedites access to veteran-specific resources, including benefits and treatment, earned through military service; and

WHEREAS, veterans deeply value their military experience and share an inimitable bond among their peers; and

WHEREAS, Veterans Treatment Courts build upon this camaraderie by allowing participants to go through the treatment court process with people who are similarly situated and have common past experiences; and

WHEREAS, Veterans Treatment Courts have captured national attention as a critical tool for ensuring veterans in the criminal justice system do not fall through the cracks; and

WHEREAS, the Texas Legislature has created statutes that allow for the creation of Regional Veterans Courts in Texas; and

WHEREAS, regional efforts often help make efficient use of limited governmental resources and can lead to opportunities for additional grant funds from other resources; and

WHEREAS, Collin County created the Collin County Veterans Court in March of 2013; and

WHEREAS, Collin County Veterans Court has helped and continues to help justice-involved veterans; and

WHEREAS, Collin County has the opportunity to participate in the North Texas Regional Veterans Court with surrounding counties and become part of one of the first regional veterans court in Texas; and

WHEREAS, the Collin County Commissioners Court has considered the matter and deems it appropriate to enact an Order approving the County's participation in the establishment of the North Texas Regional Veterans Program.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDERED BY THE COMMISSIONERS COURT OF COLLIN COUNTY, TEXAS:

Section 1. THAT the matters and facts recited in the preamble hereof are hereby found and determined to be true and correct;

Section 2. THAT the County is considered to have established a Veterans Treatment Court and is entitled to retain fees under Article 102.0178 of the Texas Code of Criminal Procedure pursuant to Chapter 124 of the Texas Government Code.

Section 3. All Orders or parts of the Orders of Collin County, Texas not consistent with or in conflict with the provisions of this Order are hereby repealed.

THIS ORDER OF THE COLLIN COUNTY COMMISSIONERS COURT IS HEREBY

ADOPTED this the ____ day of _____, 2015.

Keith Self
County Judge

Attest:

County Clerk